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MISS DAY.

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(With portrait.)

MARY ANNA DAY, for thirty-one years librarian of the Gray Herbarium, died at Cambridge, Massachusetts, January 27, 1924, in her seventy-second year. She never regarded herself as a botanist—indeed, she always approached the identification even of the commonest plants with much diffidence—yet from her extraordinary familiarity with botanical literature, keen interest in the progress and history of botany, and long service in close and helpful relation to botanical research she became a notable figure in American science.

It is customary to seek explanation of special talent in some marked personal taste, innate urge, early training, or at least in favorable environment during formative years. In most cases such contributing influences can doubtless be found. It was not so with Miss Day, and her long and successful career becomes the more remarkable from the fact that she lived more than half her life without the slightest impulse toward any natural science or the least foreknowledge that botanical literature was to become the subject of her chief interest and for many years of her unremitted activity.

She was born, of colonial ancestry, in the little hill town of Nelson in Cheshire County, New Hampshire, October 12, 1852. She was the daughter of Sewell and Hannah (Wilson) Day.¹ In personality she is said to have inherited many traits from her mother's side and

¹ It is learned from her relatives that Miss Day was christened Mary Annah, but in maturity she usually indicated her middle name merely by an initial and on the rare occasions when it was written out spelled it without the final h.

one of those was, unfortunately, a reluctance to speak much about her own experiences. It thus happens that even those who worked in her company for many years knew little of her earlier life and activities. The Day family moved from Nelson during the Civil War and took up their residence at Lancaster, Massachusetts, and it was in the Lancaster Academy that Miss Day received her education in the later sixties. From 1871 to 1878 she taught in the Massachusetts public schools, first at Sudbury, then in Clinton, where she later was for six years the first assistant in the Clinton Public Library. Here she also acquired some experience as an accountant.

In the autumn of 1892, from a desire to improve her position, she wrote to Mr. W. C. Lane, the Librarian of Harvard College, asking whether she would be eligible for work in his staff. It happened that the librarian of the Gray Herbarium, Miss Josephine A. Clark, had just accepted a call to the United States Department of Agriculture, and Miss Day's application, together with several others, was referred to the Curator of the Herbarium while he was considering candidates to fill the vacancy. Though brief and formal her note was striking from the unusual excellence of its writing, which was a "library hand" in the best sense, combining regularity and perfect clearness with individuality and strength. She was invited to a conference, came promptly, and produced a decidedly favorable impression. It was evident—indeed she took conscientious pains to make it so—that she knew nothing of botany or of botanical literature beyond the titles of three or four current text-books; but she had had practical experience in library work and it soon became clear that she had a special genius for all matters relating to records, files, accounts, and the like.

As to appearance she was of medium height and slight in build, suggesting "wiriness" rather than robust health. Her hair was already graying and without being asked she stated her age to be forty. She conveyed the impression of capability, evenness of temper, and of probable industry, with a goodly dash of the "New England conscience." Offsetting her inexperience in botany she showed more than ordinary confidence that she could make good if allowed to try and perfect herself in this new field. Being by far the most promising of the available candidates Miss Day was given the position, for which the salary was lamentably small. She came to Cambridge, and began her work at the Herbarium, January 1, 1893.

The establishment was then housed in a small story-and-a-half brick structure between the Gray frame residence and a small laboratory and auditorium, which in their turn adjoined the conservatories. Inadequate as was its building, the Herbarium was even less well endowed than housed, and at the time was meeting a rather appalling annual deficit. The library, already notable from the rarity of many of its works, was sadly cramped in shelving and had grown Topsy fashion, books being inserted on the principle of temporary convenience rather than any logical system. The previous librarian, Miss Clark, well trained at the Albany Library School, had sought to bring it into order, but her tenure had been short, the cramped conditions had hampered progress, and she had never been given much freedom in making changes in the shelving. Conditions could not have been very encouraging for a new incumbent. However, Miss Day took up her work with good courage.

The Curator was then engaged in completing, editing and preparing for press the posthumous manuscripts of Dr. Asa Gray and Dr. Sereno Watson in continuation of the Synoptical Flora of North America and had one fascicle fairly advanced. Miss Day was given as her initial task the verification of some 5000 bibliographical references in this work! In later years she often referred to this with amusement but admitted that no more immediate or effective plunge into her new activities could have been devised. It had been her own wish to begin with the cataloguing and reshelving of the library, but as she afterwards testified she could have done no very satisfactory work in such ways until she had acquired practice in the actual use of a technical reference library, and just this exercise in the verification of many citations gave her the needful experience, teaching her the relative importance of different works, the meaning of countless abbreviations, the significance of synonymy, the geographic relation of floras, value of priority in nomenclature, and such matters fundamental to scientific taxonomy.

She plowed through this task conscientiously and with great patience and good humor, quickly recognizing errors when called to her attention and not rarely suggesting improvements in the citations. She was almost immediately interested in the work and alert to perfect its details. She studied punctuation and typography as a fine art and soon came to have a correct feeling for all such matters, which made her later very expert as a proof-reader.

At this period the financing of the Herbarium became a pressing matter. A Visiting Committee was appointed, and a vigorous campaign for endowment initiated. In these matters Miss Day, who was called upon to keep all the records and accounts, took a lively and exceedingly helpful interest. Indeed, from that time she carried very effectively the statistical side of the work at the Herbarium, not merely as to budget, but regarding the growth of the collections, data for the annual report, summation and balancing of exchanges, and the like, all of them matters requiring unflagging attention to secure proper accuracy.

In 1895 the New England Botanical Club was formed and Miss Day, already acquainted with most of the charter members, was cordially interested in the organization. When the Club started its journal some four years later, she was one of the earliest contributors to the publication, preparing for it her list of the "Local Floras of New England" and "Herbariums of New England," papers which have been subject to much reference and have been decidedly useful in the work of the Club. For many years she prepared the index for RHODORA, at first declining remuneration for this considerable service.

For a few years Miss Day devoted a part of her brief summer outings to botanical field-work and brought back creditable collections from Manchester, Vermont, in 1898 (2900 specimens), Nantucket in 1900 (700 specimens), Adams in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, in 1901 (600 specimens), with lesser gatherings of later date from East Andover and Deerfield. She also aided in collecting some of the plants for the *Exsiccatae Grayanae*.

For nearly ten years the major part of the activity at the Herbarium was directed to the revision, indeed almost the rewriting, of Gray's Manual. This involved no end of bibliographical work and on that side of the undertaking Miss Day's aid was constant and invaluable, as it was later in the verification and proof-reading.

Then came the period from 1909-1915 during which through the liberality of the devoted Visiting Committee the Gray Herbarium was able to rebuild and greatly enlarge its plant. The reconstruction was carried forward a section at a time. The scientific work meanwhile went on continuously and the collections, books, catalogues and files had to be shifted several times from one part of the building to another, always kept accessible for reference, guarded against confusion, and protected from dust. It was a strenuous time for the

small staff and in this work also Miss Day showed much executive capacity. As one of her fellow-workers once remarked she was "never happier than when confronted by some clearing-up job."

Her satisfaction in the new quarters as they emerged from the turmoil of building operations was touching. Then for the first time could the books which had been crowded two and three deep upon the shelves be given logical arrangement. Long and carefully did Miss Day study the problems involved. The obsolete plan of "fixed shelf numbering" was abandoned and a new "expansive system" devised permitting the easiest possible interpolation of accessions. The labeling of the books was similarly studied to secure the best combination of simplicity, neatness, and clarity. The proper binding and treatment of pamphlets came in for careful attention. The whole catalogue had to be made over. The files of records, correspondence, labels, maps, exsiccatae-lists and autograph manuscripts, all were carefully subjected to reordering as they were placed in their new filing receptacles.

It had been fortunately possible to give Miss Day for her personal use one of the private offices. There she installed the historic files of the older correspondence, the very numerous filed botanical portraits, the records of some 250 botanical exploring expeditions and what she called her "gossip corner." This last was made up of documents individually of trifling value and temporary significance but in combination rather remarkable—announcements and programs of botanical meetings of many organizations, accounts of scientific celebrations, prospectuses of botanical summer schools, notices about field excursions, applications for scientific funds, menus of botanical banquets, and newspaper clippings regarding botanical events and discoveries. During her last weeks at the Herbarium, when impaired health had sadly depleted her strength, she turned to this heterogeneous accumulation and gave it remarkably neat, compact, and lucid arrangement so that at a moment's notice it is now possible to turn, for instance, to the announcements of any one of many organizations at any particular date. It is of interest to note that even during the brief period since her death there have been several occasions on which it has become necessary to refer to this collection to secure much needed data in the course of scientific publication, thus justifying Miss Day's confidence that it would prove useful.

Miss Day's largest bibliographical work, a task which extended through twenty years, was the "Card Index of New Genera, Species and Varieties of American Plants." This publication had been planned and carried through the first twenty issues (including about 28,000 cards) by Miss Clark at Washington between 1894 and 1903, at first by herself but later with Miss Day's collaboration. In 1903 it was formally turned over by Miss Clark with its good will to the Gray Herbarium.

To grasp the magnitude of this task it is necessary to understand that it involved the indexing page by page of more than 130 scientific serials through many years, as well as very numerous monographs, published in all parts of the world and in many languages, for American plants are often given their first scientific description or are still more frequently renamed quite incidentally and inconspicuously in works relating primarily to the flora of some remote portion of the Old World. Indeed, until recently, the major part of the botanical literature relating to South America was published from European establishments. The Index was brought out in quarterly issues ranging from 1000 to 2500 cards each. About eighteen of the duplicate sets were sold to the leading botanical establishments throughout the country and in Europe. In the verification and proof-reading Miss Day had the effective aid of Miss Edith M. Vincent, the assistant librarian, but by far the greater part of the actual indexing was done by herself. When she relinquished her task last November the Index contained nearly 170,000 cards, each carrying its bibliographical reference or its message regarding synonymy, each bearing data sought out and recorded individually. It should be borne in mind that this great work was merely incidental in Miss Day's routine, a species of knitting work, carried on in the intervals between many other duties. Fortunately she had the gratification of seeing the Card Index become increasingly useful and to know that it was finally regarded as a well nigh indispensable feature in the equipment of any establishment seriously engaged on American botanical classification.

During much of her life in Cambridge Miss Day was fortunate in having the companionship of a sister, Miss Helen E. Day, and the two kept house together. Miss Helen Day acquired a wider social acquaintance than Miss Mary and became much valued for her helpful services in various charitable and philanthropic enterprises. The two sisters traveled in Europe in the summer of 1907 and their journey

included visits to Kew, the British Museum of Natural History, the Jardin des Plantes in Paris and the great botanical establishments in Geneva. In 1911 they made another trip to Europe in company with a third sister, the wife of the Rev. Burke F. Leavitt. There is no doubt that Miss Day much enjoyed these journeys and that they considerably broadened her interests but she rarely spoke of them.

After the death of her sister Helen, Miss Day made her home with Mr. and Mrs. Leavitt who had come to Cambridge on his retirement after long service in the ministry. It thus was possible for Miss Day to have the comforts of a home and consolation of being among near relatives during the three months of her final illness.

Miss Day's position at the Herbarium brought her a wide acquaintance—students puzzled by the elements of botany, candidates for the doctorate struggling with their dissertations, distinguished explorers planning expeditions, government experts from Washington, authors finishing textbooks, artists drawing botanical plates, research workers in the midst of the most baffling problems. All of them turned to her for aid when it came to the literature of their subject. She was friendly with all, interested in their work, sympathetic with their difficulties. She seemed to remember everybody.

She had a wide correspondence, that is to say she constantly received letters from former students and assistants of the Herbarium who had become established elsewhere, and she answered them as best she could. They always remembered her, remained her friends, and turned to her for assistance. They asked all imaginable questions and made the most varied requests—for transcriptions of technical matter, for citations, titles, dates of editions, advice regarding book-purchases, counsel in domestic difficulties, and one of them, settled in a far western state, asked her to send him a wife.

Miss Day became one of the oldest of Harvard's great band of specialized workers. Up to her seventieth year she changed little, retaining remarkably her energy and vigor, and to the rapidly passing four-year generations of students seemed almost as much a fixture in the University as Appleton Chapel or Memorial Hall. She rarely lost a day by illness, habitually worked after the closing hour, and voluntarily assumed many small duties in addition to her regular work. She would have made equally good in many other occupations. It was by chance that she entered botany—a chance truly fortunate for the science since her contribution to its development was individual in character, notable in extent, and of an enduring nature.